Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ World History (GEZ)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Knights & Chivalry:

Primary Source Excerpts

**1) The training of a knight began at age seven or eight when he was sent away from home to the household or some great lord or knight. He would be taught to be of service, have good manners, and be courteous. Books of etiquette were written to guide these child knights-in-training about how to behave. He was to be up early in the morning.**

Arise betimes from your bed, cross your breast, and your forehead, wash your hands and face, comb your hair, and ask the grace of God to speed you in all in your works; then go to Mass and ask mercy for all your trespasses. Say “Good Morning” courteously to whomsoever you meet by the way.

When ye have done, break your fast with good meat and drink, but before eating cross your mouth, your diet will be the better for it. Then say your grace—it occupies but little time—and thank the Lord Jesus for your food and drink. Say also a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria for the souls that lie in pain, and then go labour as you are bound to do. Be not idle, for Holy Scripture says to you of Christian faith that if you work, you must eat what you get with your hands.

Look you be true in word and deed, the better shall you prosper; for truth never works a man shame, but rather keeps him out of sin.

Make no promise save it be good, and then keep it with all your might, for every promise is a debt that must not be remitted through falsehood.

Love God and your neighbor, and thus may ye say without fear or dread that you keep all the law.

…Scorn not the poor, nor hurt any man, learn of him that can teach you, be no flatterer or scoffer, oppress not your servants, be not proud, but meek and gentle, and always walk behind your betters.

When your better shows his will, be silent; and in speaking to any man keep your hands and feet quiet, and look up into his face, and always be courteous.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**2) Training in good manners at table was a very important part of this early education.**

Now I must tell you shortly what you shall do at noon when your lord goes to his meat. Be ready to fetch him clear water, and some of you hold the towel for him until he has done, and leave not until he be set down, and ye have heard grace said. Stand before him until he bids you sit, and be always ready to serve him with clean hands.

Let courtesy and silence dwell with you.

Cut your bread with your knife and break it not. And when your pottage is brought, take your spoon and eat quietly; and do not leave your spoon in the dish, I pray you.

Look ye be not caught leaning on the table, and keep clear of soiling the cloth.

Do not hang your head over your dish, or in any wise drink with full mouth.

When ye shall drink, wipe your mouth clean with a cloth, and your hands also, so that you shall not in any way soil the cup, for then shall none of your companions be loth to drink with you.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**3) A child was taught to be courteous to all who were older than he.**

When you enter your lord’s place, say “God speed,” and with humble cheer greet all who are there present. Do not rush in rudely, but enter with head up and at an easy pace, and kneel on one knee only to your lord or sovereign, whichever he be.

If any speak to you at your coming, look straight at them with a steady eye, and give good ear t their words while they are speaking…nor let your eyes wander about the house, but pay heed to what is said, with blithe visage and diligent spirit.

Take no seat, but be ready to stand until you are bidden to sit down. Keep your hands and feet at rest.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**4) Knights were not always faithful to their vows, they did not always live up to the highest ideals of chivalry, but a false knight was always held up to contempt. In the literary work, *Morte d’Arthur* we have a picture of the characteristics of a true knight.**

Ah Lancelot, thou wert head of all Christian knights, and now there thou liest, thou that were never matched of earthly knight’s hand. And thou wert the courteoust knight that ever bare shield. And thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrad horse. And thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman. And thou wert the kindest man that ever struck with sword. And thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights. And thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies. And thou wert the sternest knight of thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. From the *Young Children’s Book.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From the *Babees’ Book* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. From the *Babees’ Book* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. From *Le Morte d’Arthur*, by Sir Thomas Malory [↑](#footnote-ref-4)